



Farming for birds

Make the most of Environmental Stewardship and the Campaign for the Farmed Environment

www.naturalengland.org.uk/es



Farmers, land managers and farm advisers all have a part to play in ensuring a healthy natural environment which is essential for sustainable farming.

Your farm has environmental value

Your farm has wildlife, natural resources, farmland birds and historic features that need your protection.

You make a difference

By adopting the Farmland Bird Package presented here you will provide the three main things needed by farmland birds to survive and thrive: overwinter seed food, nesting habitat, and food for chicks. Any part of the package that you are already doing will count towards this.

Right options, right location, right management

This leaflet helps you choose the right options and put them in the right places to make the biggest difference. If you need additional help locating or managing these options, please contact Natural England for further information.

Grey partridge



Why is your farm important for farmland birds?

Farmland birds need farmland and farmers. The birds on your farm are a good indicator of the overall health of biodiversity, as they sit high up the food chain. If bird populations are doing well then it indicates that the plants and insects on which they feed are thriving too.

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a steep decline in the country's farmland bird populations, with many declining by over 50%. A broad range of studies have shown that these declines have been caused by the loss of breeding and year round foraging habitats, meaning that our farmland birds have fewer places to nest, raise fewer young and are less able to survive the winter.

Farmers and the farming community play a vital role in reversing the fortunes of farmland birds across England. The land management skills and knowledge that farmers use to run their farm businesses are crucial to this. Farmland birds need your continued help and expertise.

Through the use of Environmental Stewardship, or voluntary options of the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE), a number of simple management measures can be put in place that will make a huge difference to farmland birds.

Research and past experience of schemes shows that farmland bird populations can respond positively and quickly when these simple measures are put in place across the farmed landscape. These measures can work alongside existing farm practices and fit within the needs of your farming business.

The 10 most wanted farmland birds

There are 10 species of birds associated with arable farmland which have declined greatly in recent decades and would benefit the most from these measures. These are:

Grey partridge, lapwing, turtle dove, skylark, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow, linnet, yellowhammer, reed bunting and corn bunting.

What can you do for farmland birds?

The Farmland Bird Package

If you can do the following three things **per 100 ha of arable farmland**, then farmland birds will thrive on your farm:

- 1 Some farmland birds, such as skylarks and lapwings, require **in-field nesting habitat**. Choose to do one of the following: 20 skylark plots in winter cereals, a 1 ha fallow plot or 1 ha of extended overwintered stubbles. Lapwings, in particular, will benefit greatly from the fallow plot option.
- 2 **Seed food during the winter and early spring** can be supplied by 2 ha of wild bird seed mixture or 5 ha of weedy overwintered stubbles (or a combination of the two). These stubbles should not receive a pre-harvest desiccant or a post-harvest herbicide.
- 3 The majority of farmland birds feed their young on insects and so require **insect-rich foraging habitats** for successful breeding. As most farmland birds are territorial during the breeding season, it is vital to establish and maintain a network of insect-rich habitats across the farm. You should aim for 1 ha made up of one or more of the following options: unharvested or unfertilised conservation headlands, reduced-herbicide cereal crop management, undersown spring cereals, cultivated margins, nectar flower mixtures or sown wildflower headlands.

What are the benefits for you?

Regular farm income:

Financial incentives are available through Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) to provide a six-monthly income for environmentally friendly land management that supports farmland birds.

Realise the wildlife potential of less productive areas:

Make awkward corners, small fields and wet areas of your farm work better for you by entering them into ELS options. The least productive areas of your farm are often (with the correct management) the best for birds.

Work with the Industry's Campaign for the Farmed Environment:

Farming for birds using the options labelled  overleaf will help contribute to the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE).

Use the farm illustration overleaf to help you choose the best locations and ELS/CFE options to benefit farmland birds on your farm.

Yellow wagtail



Need further help and information?

For details of farm events in your region or further information please contact:

Natural England

Tel: 0300 060 1695

Email: farmevents@naturalengland.org.uk

Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk/farmevents

Campaign for the Farmed Environment

Tel: 024 7685 8892

Email: cfeonline@nfu.org.uk

Website: www.cfeonline.org.uk

Front cover (Yellowhammer) and all other photographs © RSPB Images except:
In-field nesting habitat © GWCT / Peter Thompson
Overwinter seed food © Richard Winspear
Insect-rich foraging habitat © James LePage.



Campaign for the Farmed Environment partners – NFU, CLA, FWAG, LEAF, AIC, GWCT, AICC and CAAV – working in partnership with Defra and its agencies, Natural England and the Environment Agency, as well as the RSPB and other wildlife representatives.



Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

© Natural England 2009

ISBN 978-1-84754-191-6

Catalogue Code: NE232

www.naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England publications are available as accessible pdfs from: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications

Should an alternative format of this publication be required, please contact our enquiries line for more information: 0845 600 3078 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Printed on stock comprising 75% recycled fibre.